

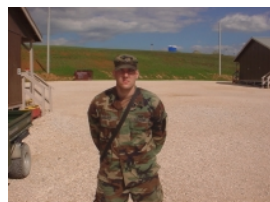


GILA NEWSLETTER

13TH EDITION

August 17, 2002

7 Gila Soldiers Pass the Promotion Board



(top-left, clockwise) SPC Hensley, SPC Pena, CPL Casanova, and SPC Elliot. Not pictured: SPC Cameron, CPL Brown, and SPC Mitchell.

For most soldiers the prospect of appearing before a panel of five senior noncommissioned officers to be grilled for an extended period of time over their knowledge of numerous soldier subjects is not exactly their definition of fun. Yet, ten brave Gila soldiers did just that last week. Although not all of the soldiers received a recommendation for promotion from the panel of NCOs, each of them displayed a great deal of courage and dedication.

The five senior NCOs sitting on the promotion board last week represented each company in the task force, as well as the Command Sergeant Major. The panel included: CSM Rather, 1SG Thomas, 1SG Wasson, SFC Mitchell, and SFC Rodriguez. Each soldier was asked questions from each member of the board covering various soldier subjects, drill and ceremony, law of war, Uniform Code of Military Justice, battle focused training, and much more. In addition to their knowledge of these soldier subjects, each soldier is graded on appearance, confidence, and presentation. Passing this board is a tremendous accomplishment for any soldier, which places them in a promotable status. Obtaining this promotional status means the soldier will be promoted to the rank of

Sergeant or Staff Sergeant as soon as their overall promotional points meet the cut-off score released each month by the Department of the Army. Regardless of their current accumulation of promotion points, these soldiers know that passing the promotional board is the major hurdle in becoming promoted into the ranks of the noncommissioned officer corps.

For the month of August seven soldiers were recommended by the promotion board. These deserving soldiers included: SPC(P)s Hensley (C Co), Pena (HHC), Elliot (HHC), Cameron (A Co), Mitchell (C Co), and CPLs Casanova (C Co), Brown (A Co). In the not-so-distant future you will see these fine soldiers wearing sergeant stripes. A fine payment for the numerous late nights studying for the board and strength of character demanded by the process. Congratulations goes out to each of these soldiers and to their peers who performed well, but will have to try again in the near future.

Next month is a milestone month for the promotion board- over twenty soldiers will go before the board. This is the highest number in recent memory for the 9th Engineers. As you read this article now, you can bet some of those twenty soldiers are studying this very minute. Dedication, not luck!

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HHC/9E: Headhunters

Once again the mighty Headhunters were on point supporting Task Force Gila in a variety of ways. A task force M203 range ran by the “Dangerous” Support Platoon highlighted last Wednesday. Despite the flash floods, the roaring thunder, and the fierce lightning bolts, the range set up (which included construction of targets with lumber and sandbags) occurred right on schedule. The range was delayed as a safety precaution with lightning in the area, but eventually it all came off without a hitch. A total of sixteen wet and muddy soldiers from throughout the battalion qualified on their assigned M203 grenade launchers.

Specialist Jessica Haffner, Private Jessica Snyder, and Private First Class Samuel Delgado didn’t know what they were getting in to for four days, but they provided excellent support to the “Dawgs” of Charlie Company as they conducted a massive cordon and search mission in the French sector. As part of house and personnel search teams, they found many illegal items to include AK-47 rifles and ammunition.

Staff Sergeant Orville Wilson instructed three soldiers from the company on the proper use and maintenance of the M923 5-ton truck qualifying Specialist Matthew Kuxhaus, Specialist Robert Athey, and Specialist Jeffery Niles on the vehicle.

At the Monday morning company work call formation, Lieutenant Colonel Nathaniel Idlet made a surprise appearance and awarded the Army Achievement Medal to Support Platoon’s very own SSG Wilson. SSG Wilson’s professionalism, attitude, and teamwork so impressed the Quality Assurance Representative at the Camp Bondsteel Ammunition Holding Area that he sent a letter to LTC Idlet praising the Battalion and praising SSG Wilson’s exemplary leadership.

The Expert Field Medical Badge (EFMB) Test has been a big focus for the company as the medics enter the final stages of their preparation. The test is set to begin on Friday, August 16, 2002. Wish them luck! We are behind them 100% and know that they are better prepared than most to succeed and earn the distinguished badge. Privat First Class Rhonda Cullins is doing more than her part to support the EFMB test as she is on a special detail to help set up the course and then act as a casualty during the testing. It will be a tough job, but it takes a special soldier to be stuck with a needle and IV fluids over and over again.

As we wrap up another week, the weather is getting cooler, and the time to redeployment is getting closer. We’ll be home before you know it! And once again, until next week...Headhunters!



SFC Stanley demonstrates the proper prone position for the M203 Grenade Launcher



SPCs Niles, Athey, and Haffner pose for the camera, as SSG Wilson overwatches on the right



Headhunter soldiers running the ammunition point- notice the swamp of mud from the extremely wet weather



1LT Olson and SFC Stanley at the M203 Range





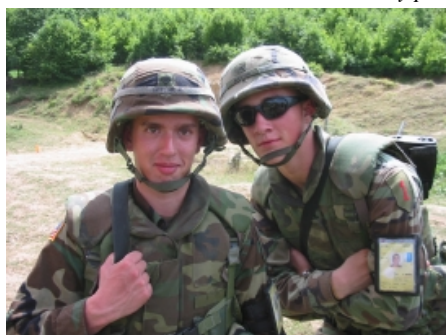
A/9E: Breach Hell!

This week, we Apaches are finishing up our third week of force protection duties. Even though the hours are long and hard, the men are holding up strong and continuing to set a positive example for the personnel stationed on Camp Bondsteel.

Alpha company continues to work hard at getting vehicles ready for turn-in and ready to be transferred to other units. The entire battalion has to reorganize and restructure its equipment to make it look like the force structure for the next Kosovo rotation. For Alpha Company, this means that we have to turn in all of our HMMWVs and get a different type of HMMWV to replace them. Just reading about it might not seem like much work, but let me assure you, it is. SSG Rojas, the company supply sergeant, is kept busy with all of the paperwork, while the mechanics and soldiers are kept busy finding faults and replacing parts on the old HMMWVs. To make the entire process more interesting, and a true challenge for the leaders, Alpha Company has to continue executing missions throughout the entire turnover process. So far, this process has seemed to start slowly, but major progress was noted this past week and it looks as if it will all be over in less than a month.



SGT Battle and SPC Oliver check vehicles as they pass Gate 3



PFC Martin and SPC Letcher take time to pose for a quick photo

This week the platoons kept up the same rotation of guard and escort, intermixed with some time off. The one comment that all the soldiers on guard agree on is that they were all ready for the break in the weather. The past seven days has afforded all of Camp Bondsteel some relief from the usually relentless sun beating down on us twelve hours out of the day. The air feels almost of fall, which has given the guards (especially those on Gate 3) some extra energy to complete their long mission each day.



SGT Wilbanks and SPC Doak work hard to stay organized while competing all the necessary maintenance missions

This week also marked the first week of the operational Expert Field Medical Badge training lane on Camp Bondsteel. SSG Labrador is heading up a squad of soldiers consisting of SPC Boyer, SPC McElroy, SPC Cameron, and SPC Castaneda to test the Medical badge hopefuls on their ability to use military communication equipment. These Apaches must be on their toes, because the 24 hours-a-day testing site is responsible for in-processing the soldiers, testing them on their knowledge of operation of the equipment and standard operating procedures for using it, and out-processing the soldiers. Although this job is very tedious, it seems to be a welcome brake from the three weeks of guard the remainder of the company has endured.

With another week down, the Apaches have moved past the half-way point on this deployment, and are well on their way to completing their portion of the mission here in Kosovo. In the upcoming weeks, Alpha Company will regain the mission of the QRF as well as being the overall "mission company" for MNB(E) engineer missions. Look forward to seeing your demolition using, ACE driving, SEE digging, and picket pounding sappers hard at work, because there is no slack when it comes to mission. Until then, keep thinking of us, while we continue to BREACH HELL!





B/9E: Outlaws

Dear Outlaw Families,

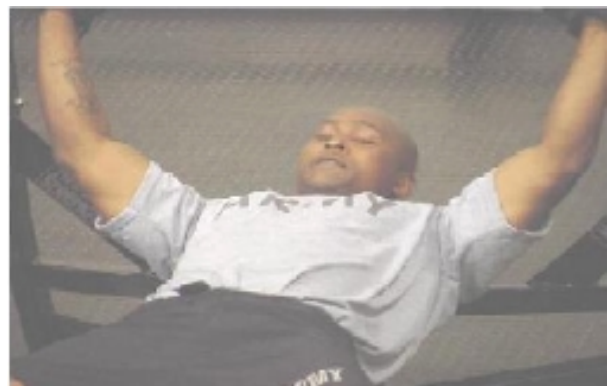
We finally went over the hump, and are half way there. We are very excited to say the least. The only one , who is not excited here is our mascot at the church. This little puppy is babied by everyone, he probably eats better than any other animal in Kosovo. Maybe someone can send an appropriate name. I only wonder if he will make his way into the Milvan.



This week everyone is busy as usual. A&O Platoon decided to completely move away to Camp Bondsteel for a week, for their "DIG EX" They are training on all of their heavy equipment. They have probably dug holes in every corner of the camp by now. This is real good training, and a terrific opportunity to allow them to have different scenery. 1st Platoon completed a wooden cover for a local well. Just a few weeks ago, a soldier was land navigating through the woods and fell into the well. He was not hurt, but now the area is safe. 2nd Platoon was the only platoon that was not given the time to have fun in the last 2 weeks. They continued to patrol the city, but will have the opportunity to train next week. Now don't worry. We are not completely about work. Sgt Evans found time to enter and place in the Camp Monteith Bench Press Competition. Next he will be bench pressing the vehicles in the motorpool. Sgt Evans former work out buddy, Sgt Calder, was called back to Camp Bondsteel to help them with their maintenance. Other Outlaws have also left. SGT Adler went back to Schweinfurt to assist the maintenance program back there, actually he went back to become a father.

That reminds me that SGT Thompson and Sgt Bosomworth also went back to become fathers. There must be something in that Schweinfurt water. I was told to add a note in this message to keep the mail, packages, goodies, and everything else coming. We miss you all terribly and cant wait for the next 3 months to pass as fast as the first 3 months. If you have any issues or concerns don't hesitate to call the rear detachment. SSG Myers is highly capable and ready to assist.

God Bless,
CPT Bill Lash



SGT Evans competes in the bench press competition





C/9E: Dawgs of War

This week was an exciting week for the Dawgs of War. The Dawgs participated in a company mission with the French in the northern section of Kosovo. This mission not only gave Charlie Company the opportunity to work together as one whole team, but it also afforded us the opportunity to work with foreign nations and a variety of other US military contingents.

Due to the constraints and need for secrecy, the mission was not given to Charlie Company until just days before its execution. However, in true Charlie Company style, the Dawgs immediately jumped into action, working together to plan, train and rehearse for the large-scale operation. In addition to training our own troops, we also had to incorporate a military police squad, emergency ordinance disposal, military working dogs and French troops who would actually be attached to our company for the mission.

After a small train-up on search operations, the Dawgs headed up to Novo Selo to the French camp where we received a warm welcome and the opportunity to experience life in the French Army. We coordinated joint rehearsals with the French and got an opportunity to share tactics and methods of searching with the French soldiers. It was certainly a unique experience, as the Dawgs dined in the French Cafeteria on Chicken Cordon Blue and pastries. The French even serve wine in their military dining facilities, although the Americans were restricted to bottled water.



CPL Smith shows the Dog how to attack



One smart dog learns from the Dawgs



*MNB-N
(French)
Commander
comes to visit
the Dawgs
and learn our
procedures*



*Captured
grenades*

The mission kicked off in the early morning of the 10th of August as the Dawgs convoyed through rough terrain to our objective. The two hour drive in the darkness before dawn was long and arduous, but there was an obvious excitement that was prevalent in every soldier. Once we reached our objective, the search began. Within the first thirty minutes, we uncovered an illegal assault rifle. That set the stage for the remainder of the day. The mission proved to be a huge success for Charlie Company and KFOR, as the Dawgs led the way seizing nearly 1000 rounds of ammunition, assorted military clothing and paraphernalia, two shotguns and even grenades.

On the second day of the operation, Charlie Company was responsible for establishing checkpoints around another city to be searched by the French and the Spanish. While not quite as exciting as the previous days operation, the Dawgs got after their task with the same zeal and dedication, helping the French and Spanish successfully complete their missions.

On the third day, Charlie Company returned to Bondsteel successful, our moral high, and proud of what we were able to accomplish as a team. Several soldiers received company coins for the operation and all were congratulated and commended by our Battalion Commander.

Our continuing thanks for all the support you give our soldiers. It is because of your love and devotion that they can accomplish what they have and continue to excel. As we pass the halfway mark in the deployment our thoughts are with all our love ones and of home. Keep us in your thoughts and prayers as you are always in ours.





A/94E: Warriors

Mud

As the sun moves behind the clouds and the rain continues to fall, the Alpha Warriors continue driving on with the mission at hand: “providing top quality construction.” Although the rainy weather might slow down construction progress, the Warriors don their wet weather gear and continue to construct within the region.

The VCN Access Road is one of the company’s main focal points right now, considering it is nearly 5 kilometers long. SSG Hancock is heading up this project while SSG Daisy shifts his focus to the Falcon 4 Bypass Road. The bypass road is scheduled to begin construction at the beginning of September. SSG Hancock and his crew continue to shine even though their mission has been plagued with rainy weather and maintenance. His soldiers continue to finish the road to standard and on schedule.

The vertical squad continues their support of the Fighter Management Pass Program (FMPP), while preparing for the month’s cyclic inventories. SSG Taitague’s squad is also preparing for their turn to assist on the Mabey-Johnson Bridge project. Their task will be to install the concrete abutments for the bridge starting on the 13th of September. Currently, SSG Kenny and his soldiers are showing off their skills while working with the Royal British Engineers on the bridge project.

While the Alpha Warriors conduct common construction missions one quote comes to mind, “When you do common things in life in an uncommon way, you will command the attention of the world.” by George Washington Carver. That is exactly what the Warriors are doing by setting the example and leading the way: commanding attention from the world!



SGT Saimbert and the two British Royal engineers, Lance Corporal Pritchard and Sapper Johnston, take a break from operating their equipment



SGT Clack take time out of his busy schedule to clean his weapon



PFC Valenzuela's promotion



PFC Scherbarth does outstanding maintenance work while at the VCN Access Site





737th EOD

This was a very busy week for Aftershock 737. Along with providing continued incident response to the entire MNB (E) (Multi-National-Brigade East) sector. The 737th provided support to two cordon searches conducted in the British (1/7 Field Artillery) and French (Charlie Company TF9E) sectors to find weapons and explosives. The unit also supported Catholic pilgrimage to see the Black Madonna the march involved 10,000 people. EOD was there to ensure the march did not involve any terrorist acts that could spoil the march activities. The unit also provided support to two body recovery missions on possible booby-trapped bodies. The unit is also engaged in the turn in of excess equipment. The unit has seven high mileage vehicles to turn in, but before turn in can be accomplished communications equipment has to be transferred. The unit also conducted another VTC with friends and loved ones back at FT Belvoir, VA. This was huge morale booster.

I usually don't talk about incidents we conduct but I will mention one that occurred this week. It involved a grenade in a river next to a bridge. What is unusual about this incident is a child spotted the grenade while playing in the water. Due to the fact that past units and this unit have been heavily engaged with letting the public (Kids) know what a grenade or landmine looks like and what to do probably save his life and the lives of the kids who were playing in the water. The grenade was booby-trapped and SSG Hood neutralized the grenade and made it possible to pick up the grenade and transport it to a safe holding area for later destruction. Good job SSG Hood!!

SSG Blanchard also received his senior EOD badge, which is a great accomplishment. Holding a senior badge in EOD means that you have been dealing with unexploded bombs for three years without incident. Good job SSG Blanchard; keep up the good work.

The unit continues to focus on mission requirements. The OPTEMPO remains steady. Vigilance and safety continue to be the unit's underlying priorities during all phases of this peacekeeping mission.

CPT Green



SSG
Blanchard
receiving his
Senior EOD
badge

SSG Hood
conducting the
incident with the
booby-trapped
grenade



CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Morale here in Kosovo remains a strong 7 out of a possible 10. What that means is that, on the whole, everyone in TF 9th ENG is doing fairly well. I pray that the morale back in the rear is good also. Time is really flying by! It seems to me that whenever you are really busy, and working hard, the hours, days, and weeks just fly by. As we head toward the end of August and beginning of September, I expect that everyone is going to start to see the light at the end of the tunnel, so to speak, and morale will start to steadily climb back up. Until then, we have plenty of work to do, here in Kosovo, to keep us busy and occupied; Our plates are really full! I know, with the start of school fast approaching, that those of you in the rear will be extremely busy. Be assured that we pray for you just as you pray for us!!! We know that we simply could not do what we are doing here without your loving support back home!!! God works through you to bless us here in Kosovo!!! Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote, "If we would not be satisfied until we had passed a share of our happiness on to other people, what a world we could make!" God bless!!!

JAMES W. BLOUNT
Chaplain (CPT) USA
Battalion Chaplain



Scenes from KFOR 4A



PFCs Flowers and Edwards set their sights on the Expert Field Medical Badge. This train-up is in preparation for a grueling 10-day testing period from 16-25 August.



Charlie Dawgs conducting a search with overwatch security



C Co's PFC Patterson holds the guidon while the company listens to Gila 6



Gila soldiers at the M203 Grenade Launcher Range



The Dawgs look everywhere, even in bee hives!

Editor in Chief
The Gila Adjutant

TASK FORCE 9TH ENGINEER (C)

